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***FEDERAL IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS AGREES TO JOIN ‘GIITEM’
Anti-Gang Task Force Focuses on Gangs, Drugs, Border Crime***

PHOENIX – Governor Janet Napolitano today welcomed a team effort on the part of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), as the organization agreed to join the multi-agency “GIITEM” Task Force, which focuses on gang activity and border-related crime, including human smuggling and drug trafficking. ICE is under the direction of a new Special-Agent-in-Charge, Alonzo Peña, who, in just two weeks in the position, has already garnered praise for his cooperative spirit in working with local authorities.

Just this week, Peña and Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) Director Roger Vanderpool agreed to pool resources and work together on the Arizona Border Enforcement Security Task Force (BEST), managed by ICE and GIITEM, which is under the direction of DPS. The work of both groups is essential to border security.

“GIITEM” (the acronym for Gang Immigration and Intelligence Team Enforcement Mission) Task Forces are located throughout Arizona, and include officers from DPS, local police and deputies from the county sheriffs’ departments. At the direction of Governor Napolitano, additional officers were added to GIITEM squads along the Arizona-Mexico border, so that investigators could spend more time focusing on vehicle theft, human smuggling and financial crimes that fund criminal organizations.

“These two steps: a commitment from ICE to work hand-in-hand with GIITEM and our allocation of DPS officers to join BEST are tremendous advances in our cooperation,” said Napolitano. “This adds another layer of enforcement and expertise to the squads to make our communities safer.”

“I truly believe the spirit of cooperation among all law enforcement agencies is crucial to building the teamwork that is necessary to better serve the citizens of Arizona,” said Peña. “I am pleased to offer ICE’s support in this effort, and, in exchange, welcome the cooperation of DPS. Ultimately, our collective goal is to create a safer state.”

The squads’ work is instrumental in cracking down on organized criminal activities, such as offenses committed by street gangs and cross-border traffickers.